

## THE VILLAGE BIRDING LIFE -- A Little Diversion

*by HSV Audubon (photos by Vic Prislipsky)*

Willows have leafed out and bluebirds, nuthatches, chickadees, wrens and tufted titmouse are courting and building nests. Butterflies are flitting, frogs are peeping and a few toads are croaking. Twice a red-shouldered hawk glided across the ninth green at Cortez, once with a snake in its talons and later with a small rodent, surely on its way to a nest with young. Spring is here.

Despite these exciting first signs of spring, birding can be a bit boring at this time of the year. Many of the birds that we've watched all winter haven't yet moved north. "Oh, just another Fox Sparrow" or "only a Goldeneye" are signs that we're eager to see something different. Feeder watchers are weary of the Pine Siskins and the \$20 worth of seed they've been eating each month. Even though, a host of migrants are on the way, such as, swallows, flycatchers, vireos, tanagers, warblers and, yes, hummingbirds, we need to celebrate spring now.

Fortunately, nature always provides an ideal form for celebration. Take an hour or two to slowly walk one of our beautiful trails and you will be rewarded with one of nature's finest displays- wild flowers. One of the earliest colorful spring bloomers is the tiny bluet. Bluets prefer disturbed rocky habitat like roadsides, trail edges and the margins of the golf course fairways. Often, they can be found in profuse patches. Springs beauties, violets and bloodroot follow a week or so later. If you want to witness true beauty be sure to examine the spring beauty's delicate pink streaking and stamen. Yet to come are the darker colored trilliums and spiderwort. Of course, there are the dogwoods and red buds. Poke around carefully later in the spring and you might even find a rare wild orchid. Just be sure to check yourself for ticks when you're done. The kinds of wild flowers that bloom in the Village goes on and on. And, every one is a beauty in it's own way.

Although all of the trails have wild flowers, the best trail for wild flowers is Cedar Creek. It's mix of soil types leads to a greater variety of flowers. Try a warm sunny day in March for a marvelous display of yellow trout lilies. Look more closely to find white and pinkish rue anemone, violets, brilliant white bloodroot and the white flowers of the toothwort.

Early spring to early summer is the best time to view wild flowers in the Village. While there is a progression of wild flowers until late fall, looking for flowers in the heat and humidity of serious summer is only for the most curious.

As always more information about birds and birding is available from the Hot Springs Village Audubon Society. And yes, a number of our members know the wild flowers, too. The April Audubon meeting at the Coronado Center has been moved to the 3rd Friday of the month. The May meeting returns to the normal second Friday schedule. Guests are always welcome. Please remember to visit Hot Springs Village Audubon at [hsvbirds.org](http://hsvbirds.org). for much more information about birds and Audubon.